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ABSTRACT

Although individuals aim their attempts to exert legitimate political influence at particular levels of government, the hierarchical organization of "political influence attempts" is an aspect of political participation which has not yet received systematic study. In order to examine the perceived political influence of rural people in a politically active farming region of the Upper Midwest, an area probability sample of 112 adults from Chippewa County, Wisconsin, contained approximately equal numbers of men and women. Using personal and telephone interviews, an 18 item scale ranked people hierarchically according to the highest level of local, state or federal government at which they felt they were most influential. Perceived political influence was associated with several personal and positional characteristics, including educational attainment, occupational status, annual family income, age, sex, political knowledge, sense of political efficacy and political interest. When regression techniques assessed the relationship between these characteristics and the perceived influence scale, occupational level and political efficacy appeared as important variables for men, and family income and political interest important variables for women. The methodology utilized should be potentially useful as a measure of the otherwise elusive status attainment dependent variable, political status.
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Political Participation in a Rural Wisconsin County

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ABSTRACT

Individuals aim their attempts to exert legitimate political influence at particular levels of government. As has been recognized in some of the status stratification literature, these levels are hierarchically organized in terms of differential inclusiveness of control. Nonetheless, the hierarchical organization of political influence attempts is an aspect of political participation which has not yet received systematic study. Such an effort is reported herein, in which we provide initial data on perceived political influence of rural people in a farming region of the upper Midwest. An area probability sample of 112 adults drawn from Chippewa County, Wisconsin, containing approximately equal numbers of men and women is utilized to assess the reliability and validity of the measurement scheme. Employing our measurement technique, we find positive relationships between our measure and traditional status measures such as educational attainment, SEI scores, and family income. We also find positive relationships with measures of political knowledge and political efficacy. We find marked sex interactions in the political participation process. Besides those substantive findings, it should be noted that the method used herein is potentially useful as a measure of the otherwise elusive status attainment dependent variable, political status.

INTRODUCTION

Political participation has been defined as "those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel and/or the actions they take." (Verba and Nie, 1972: 2.) Political participation theorists have held that those who participate are likely to be more powerful than others because "someone must make political decisions and appoint, uphold, and remove leaders. ...Likewise, some have held that although not all who participate possess effective power, those who do not participate cannot share or exercise power"(McClosky, 1968: 253).

The above conception of political participation seems to imply that embodied in the concept of political participation is the concept of influence,[1] yet the majority[2] of participation studies have been content to simply ascertain whether or not a respondent has engaged in political activities without regard to the effect of such activities on the decisions made by political authorities.

Recognizing the need to ascertain the influence potential inherent in political participation attempts, a perceived political influence scale[3] was devised which not only seeks information concerning whether or not an individual has participated but also addresses the question of influence by asking the respondent to indicate if he got what he wanted out of his influence attempt.

The present concept of political participation is closely related to the concept of legitimate political influence, a hierarchical variable which has been proposed (Haller and Saraiva, 1972) as a way of thinking about political stratification. The resulting instrument, therefore, may

by appropriate as a way of measuring the latter variable. Then it would also contribute to status attainment research by supplying a measurement of the political dimension of stratification, a dimension which has been a persistent theme throughout the development of stratification theory and research.

In devising a framework with which to look at participation as successful influence attempts, this project concentrates on what may be considered a subset of political participation; that is, active political participation involving direct contact with legislative and executive political officials. Further, each of the questions asks the respondents if they got what they wanted out of their influence attempts. Perhaps a sample question is in order here:

Have you ever helped to organize people to try to convince a city council or county board that it should support a position your group favored?

Yes No Don't know

Has the city council or county board ever voted to approve a position favored by your group?

Yes Partly No Don't know Inappropriate

Respondents are scored on the basis of the second part of the question, that is, a respondent receives a score of 2 if he answers yes to the second question, 1 if he answers partly, and 0 if he answers no, don't know, or inappropriate. Participation, in such a question, becomes a measure of perceived influence on the governmental system, including whether or not respondents participate and whether or not they perceive such participation to have been successful.[4]

The present conceptualization of perceived political influence differs from participation scales in two ways. First, it is concerned with participation only as it is directed as political officials.[5]

This conceptualization narrows the items which have been traditionally measured by participation scales. In particular, it does not ask questions concerning such items as voting and campaigning in a political election. Office holding is not specified, but enters to the extent that a holder of an elective office or an aid appointed by such an office holder would have reported extensive influence as a part of his normal work. This limitation was chosen because the scale was developed to measure influence as it is embodied in participation. Since it is not clear what influence would mean in the context of voting or campaigning such items were not included in the analysis. Such a limitation of the range of participation activities necessarily implies that the sample of those who are seen as participants will be smaller than for other participation studies.

Second, as noted above, the present measurement scale incorporates perceived influence into the measurement of participation. As such, the present scale permits a look at participation which is effective in the sense implied by McCloskey (1968).

Individuals are scaled on this instrument according to the highest level of government at which they perceive that they have obtained something they desired. It would appear that the level of government at which influence was exerted would provide a natural metric by which to rank individuals' perceived influence. If one influences affairs at the national level, the scope of effects of that influence would be greater than if one had affected affairs at the state level. In turn, the scope of these would be greater than if one had affected affairs at the local level. Finally, the latter would be greater than having made no attempts at all. Therefore, to affect higher levels of government implies a more

inclusive scope of influence than affecting lower levels. Those individuals who affect such higher levels of government may have their efforts felt at lower levels, so we consider them to be more influential than those who affect government at lower levels.

On the other hand, the scale does not imply that to affect higher levels of government, one must necessarily have attempted to exert influence at a lower level. However, as Table 1 indicates, most individuals who affect higher levels of government have also been active at the lower levels. This seems reasonable when one considers that on an individual level, skill in the affecting of higher levels of politics was probably gained somewhere, most likely at both the state and local levels. Thus, while some nationally powerful people may not presently be involved with lower levels, many would have done so at some time. In any case, it is obvious that decisions at a more inclusive level affect behavior at all the lower levels encompassed by it.

THE SCALES

Two scales, one of 18 items and one of 3 items, were constructed for the present study. Both scales were designed to measure perceived influence at three levels of government, the local level, the state level, and the federal level. The second was intended to be a short form of the first. Within each of these levels, perceived influence is conceived to be exerted on members of both the executive and legislative branches of government.[6] Because each branch is present at any single level, people are considered equally influential if they report successfully influencing either of the two at a given level.[7]

On the longer (18 item scale) within each of these three levels we considered six ways in which any given individual could have exerted influence. These were generated by cross-classifying the two branches of government by three modes of influence. The individual could have

Table 1

Distribution of Perceived Political Influence, By Level of Government
n = (112)[a,b]

Local Influence	National Influence			
	Reports No Instance of National Influence		Reports at Least One Instance of National Influence	
	Reports No Instance of State Influence	Reports at Least One Instance of State Influence	Reports No Instance of State Influence	Reports at Least One Instance of State Influence
Reports No Instances of Local Influence	53 (46) [49]	3 (5) [16]	0 (5) [0]	0 (4) [3]
Reports at Least One Instance of Local Influence	32 (16) [2]	9 (11) [16]	4 (9) [2]	10 (16) [20]

[a]The source of this and all subsequent tables is the present data.

[b]Numbers in parenthesis refer to short form time one, numbers in brackets refer to short form time two, numbers with neither brackets nor parenthesis refer to long form.

reported that he discussed (mode 1) matters with legislative (branch 1) or executive (branch 2) officials and had gotten them to do something he desired; or he could have reported that he helped prepare or advised others in preparing recommendations (mode 2) which were later approved by legislative (branch 1) or executive (branch 2) officials; or he could have reported that he had organized people to convince a legislative (branch 1) or executive (branch 2) official to support a position his group favored (mode 3) and had that position approved.

The actual forms of influence to be considered were decided upon after five intensive interviews of 1-1.5 hours each carried out by the project director previous to the present study. These in turn were structured after considerable participant observation in situations in which political influence was exercised in rural and urban contexts in the United States and Brazil. Observations of the actions of a powerful farmers' group in the upper midwest were particularly useful. The subjects of these interviews were men who had been selected by the editor of the Wisconsin Farmers Union, a weekly newspaper which is politically influential at the local and state levels. The individuals were selected on the following basis: (1) one older man was politically knowledgeable and politically active, (2) one older man was politically knowledgeable and not politically active, (3) two younger men were politically knowledgeable and potentially active. (There was no restriction to men, but women's names did not come up. Even so, in some of the actual interviews, women participated a great deal.) During these interviews, the subjects indicated the kinds of activities they engaged in when politically active. The information gained in this way was used to help formulate the questions which were later asked of the members of the sample concerning their political activities. Such a cross-classification was generated to insure that the scale would

cover a representative range of possible political activities and would thus contribute to the content validity of the analysis. In this context, we may draw support from the following remark from Nunnally, "Even though there often are problems with ensuring content validity, inevitably content validity rests mainly on appeals to reason regarding the adequacy with which the content has been cast in the form of test items." (1967: 82.)

The shorter (3-item) scale was constructed with all three modes of influence, both branches of government, and the degree of success collapsed into one question, applied (with appropriate modifications) at each of the three levels of government. An example of such a question, referring to the local level, is:

> Turning first to your city or county, how often would you say that you are successful in getting elected officials or their aids in your city or county to take actions you think are important?

We had hoped that the shorter (3-item) scale would be highly correlated with the longer (18-item) scale and would be reliable in its own right so that it could be used in further research. However, the test-retest stability for the shorter-form was only .525, a level which the research team considers to be too low to permit its use as a reliable instrument. Moreover, the convergent validity of the 3-item scale, as measured by its correlation with the 18-item scale, is also modest (.514).

Several possible reasons why the short (3-item) scale has relatively low apparent reliability and validity are worth discussing: (1) Since the questions are quite broad, those people for whom politics are not particularly salient may have interpreted them differently in the two

applications. Thus the latitude for interpretation of the questions may have resulted in the same respondent attributing a different meaning to the same question when it was asked at two different times. In other words, some of the unreliability might have been due to ambiguity in the questions. (2) The questions were asked using two distinct interview formats, the first being a personal interview and the second being a telephone interview. Here is should be noted that the interviewers were inexperienced in this type of telephone interviewing. Thus, some of the low reliability may have been due to the effect of the differing methods of interviewing. (3) Finally, it might be argued that people's participation changed between the two measurement times. While any particularly crucial event occurring in this period may have led to these actual changes, we have no evidence that such an event took place. In any case, in lieu of the relatively short time span between the first measurement and the second measurement, such major changes are not likely. So the best guess is that the apparent unreliability (and invalidity) is real, and that it is due to one or both of question-ambiguity and interviewing method.

Table 2 compares the distribution of responses for each of the three forms (18-item scale, 3-item scale time 1, 3-item scale time 2). While the true distribution of responses is, of course, an empirical question, the pattern of responses to the long form seems more plausible than does that for the short form. One must wonder, for example, why nearly one-third of the respondents to the short form (time 1) indicate national participation, when this is more than the <u>combined</u> total for state and local. This table provides substantial support for the greater face validity of the long form.

Table 2

Distribution of Scoring of Perceived Political Influence
(n = 112)[a]

	Short Form T_1	Short Form T_2	Long Form
No participation	0 (46)	0 (49)	0 (54)
Local participation	1 (16)	1 (2)	1-6 (32)
State participation	2 (16)	2 (32)	7-12 (12)
National participation	3 (34)	3 (25)	13-18 (14)

[a]Column totals less than 112 indicate missing data.

Both the modest (.525) test-retest correlation of the short form and the relatively low (.514) correlation between the short form (time 1) and the long form lead us to be skeptical regarding the usefulness of the short form. Admittedly, this is based on somewhat limited information, given that we do not have a test-retest coefficient for the long form and therefore have no direct evidence that it would be more stable than the short form. Still, a number of considerations lead us to favor the long form, the most notable being Nunnally's assertion that "the reliability of scores obtained on a sample of items from a domain increases with the number of items sampled." (1967: 192.) The long form makes use of much more clearly specified information than does the short form, results in more variation between respondents, and hence should allow us to more reliably and validly deal with political participation. (See Appendix A for the scaling technique and internal consistency of the 18-item scale, which should provide further support for using the long form.)

THE MEASUREMENT OF PERCEIVED POLITICAL INFLUENCE

Sample

Data for the present study were collected by the Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory in the Spring of 1976. The scales were pretested in Dane County, Wisconsin, using personal interview techniques. The present study is based on personal and telephone interviews conducted in Chippewa County, Wisconsin, using an area probability sample of households. Total sample size is 112. All respondents are non-institutionalized adults, 18 years of age and over. The sample is split approximately evenly across sex with 44 percent female and 56 percent male.

Chippewa County was specifically selected as a test site for the research as we had reason to believe that residents there might be more politically active than individuals in other areas of the state, thus permitting a more adequate evaluation of the scale's ability to detect the rather rare instances in which influence is exercised at the federal and state levels. An important reason for this belief was the fact that the Wisconsin Farmers' Union has its headquarters there. Because of the possible bias of this sample towards political activity, the results should not be generalized beyond Chippewa County. However, due to the nature of our sample, we are also able to address a previously neglected topic, namely that of the political participation of rural people in a rather well-to-do upper midwestern farm area.

Variables

Studies of participation have consistently found that participation tends to be higher among the better educated, members of the higher occupational and income groups, the middle-aged, the dominant ethnic and religious groups, men (as opposed to women), settled residents, urban dwellers, and members of voluntary associations." (McClosky, 1968: 256.) They also find political participation to be associated with such variables as political awareness, that is, actual knowledge of political affairs (or the rules of the game), and political efficacy. (Milbrath, 1965: 40, 54.) We have drawn upon this literature in the selection of our variables.

Individual positional characteristics in our sample will include the following: Occupational status will be measured by Duncan's (1961) Socioeconomic Index (SEI). Educational attainment is measured as years of education successfully completed (ED). Family income is measured as the sum of respondent's and spouse's combined 1975 annual income (INC). Other demographic variables include age (AGE) and sex (SEX).

Personal characteristics will include sense of political efficacy (EFF), political knowledge (KNOW), and political interest (PINT). The political efficacy scale is a five item scale with possible scores ranging from 0 to 5. High values correspond to a high sense of personal effectiveness in regards to politics. The alpha coefficient for the scale is .387. (For an extensive review of the concept of political efficacy see Prewitt, 1968: 225-228.)

The political knowledge variable was developed by project personnel and described by Olson (1977) to measure the person's ability to identify offices in the current political structure. We consider this to be a potentially important variable; for without knowledge of the structure of government, even if one would like to attempt to exert influence over political matters, one is at a loss to fit himself into that system. With such knowledge, on the other hand, a person is aware of the appropriate channels through which he can affect the political process.

With this in mind, a nine item scale was constructed consisting of questions about all three branches of government (legislative, executive, and judicial) asked concerning all three levels of government (local, state, and federal). In each question, respondents were asked to identify the office with the most authority in that particular branch of government at a particular level of government. An example of this type of question asked:

> Which of these offices has the most authority in legislative matters on the federal level? Would it be U.S. Senator, U.S. Secretary of Defense, or Attorney General?

Total scores on the scale range from 0 to 9 with high values indicating a greater number of correct answers. The alpha coefficient for the political knowledge scale is .817.

The measure of political interest is a single item indicator which assesses the respondent's interest in political affairs. Possible scores on the item range from 1 to 4. The test/retest stability for the item is .638.

The specification of the dependent variable, the (18-item) perceived political influence scale is discussed in Appendix A.

ANALYSIS OF THE PERCEIVED POLITICAL INFLUENCE

TOTAL SAMPLE ANALYSIS

Several resources have been considered as important predictors of political participation. These include such positional characteristics as educational attainment, occupational standing, and annual family income, and such personal characteristics as sense of political efficacy, political knowledge, and political interest. Finally, age and sex have been thought to be related to political participation and we will consider them in the present analysis.

We will employ standardized regression techniques to measure the effects of these variables. Table 3 presents the total sample zero-order correlations, means, and standard deviations for the variables to be considered below.

It has been suggested in the political participation literature[8] that level of educational attainment is the best predictor of political participation, therefore suggesting a positive effect on influence. Equation 1 of Table 4 indicates, however, that in the bivariate case the beta coefficient for education is only .125 and is not statistically significant. Other researchers[9] have noted the need to include other positional variables such as occupational status and income. Adding these variables to the equation

Table 3

Zero Order Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations of Basic Variables for the Total Sample N = 112[a]

X	SD		PART	ED	AGE	SEI	INC	SEX	KNOW	EFF	PINT
3.50	4.87	PART	1.000								
11.58	2.78	ED	.125	1.000							
45.03	18.25	AGE	.020	-.266	1.000						
35.72	21.29	SEI	.239	.368	.103	1.000					
8740.50[b]	7975.20	INC	.146	.162	-.126	-.012	1.000				
.56	.50	SEX	.303	-.050	-.076	.053	.020	1.000			
5.43	2.65	KNOW	.312	.442	-.132	.382	.191	.095	1.000		
2.37	1.29	EFF	.310	.341	-.261	.294	.184	.013	.326	1.000	
2.94	1.02	PINT	.340	.200	.071	.154	.130	.177	.404	.114	1.000

[a]For this and all following tables, PART = Level of perceived political influence; ED = years of education successfully completed; AGE = age as of April, 1976; SEI = Duncan socioeconomic index score; INC = annual family income; SEX = respondent's sex; KNOW = political knowledge; EFF = sense of political efficacy; PINT = political interest.

[b]One respondent reported an income of $915,000. Since this outlier misleadingly distorted the mean and standard deviation, it was excluded from the calculation of income.

Table 4

Standardized Beta Coefficients of Perceived Political Influence Resource Variables for the Total Sample (N = 112)[a]

Independent Variables	(1) Beta	(2) Beta	(3) Beta	(4) Beta	(5) Beta	(6) Beta
ED	.125	.015	.059	.015	-.041	-.060
SEI		.235*	.197*	.125	.080	.090
INC		.146	.140	.103	.081	.068
AGE			.055	.118	.123	.088
SEX			.297*	.300*	.283*	.250*
EFF				.276*	.252*	.250*
KNOW					.192*	.115
PINT						.204*
$\bar{R}^2$	.007	.054	.127	.182	.201	.229

[a]* denotes betas significant at .05 level.

reduces the effects of education to .015. While family income has no significant effect on perceived political influence, we do find that occupation has a substantial effect. This would suggest that of all the best known hierarchical status variables, occupational SEI has the greatest effect on perceived political influence.

This finding is not surprising for a variety of reasons: (1) occupation often serves as a point of status ranking in American society; (2) occupational scores serve as indicators of amount of control over jobs and organizations; and (3) occupational position can hinder or enhance access to public authorities. To the extent that conditions of high status, greater control over jobs and organizations, and greater access to public authorities are captured in the occupational measure, one might expect it to be related to influence. We might also suggest that any effects that education might have on political influence will be mediated through the occupational level that such education enables a person to obtain.

When age and sex are added to the equation containing education, occupation, and income, we find that age makes little difference,[10] while sex is highly related to perceived political influence. It seems that net of measured background, the very fact of being male makes it more likely that one will perceive himself to be influential in politics.

When sense of political efficacy is added to the above equation, the effect of occupation on political influence becomes insignificant, while the effects of sex remain important. Apparently most of the effect of occupation on influence is mediated by sense of political efficacy.

Adding political knowledge to the equation shows that it too is significantly related to perceived influence, and that both sense of efficacy and sex remain importantly related to influence. When political interest is entered into the full equation, it is found to have an important effect on influence. Both efficacy and sex remain important, while political knowledge falls below significance. The $\bar{R}^2$ for the full equation is .229.

Our evidence suggests that as resources for perceived political influence, personal characteristics such as sense of political efficacy, political knowledge, and political interest are more effective than positional characteristics such as education, occupation, and income. Further, age does not seem to matter, while sex remains an important predictor of perceived political influence.

On the basis of these results, we decided to stratify the sample on the basis of sex. Table 5 presents the zero-order correlations, means and standard deviations for males, and Table 6 presents this information for females.

The most striking feature of these tables is the marked discrepancy in the means of the influence variable. Not only do men obtain much higher perceived influence scores, but also show proportionately lower standard deviations relative to women (i.e., the coefficients of variation are lower). The means also indicate that for both men and women, the majority of perceived influence occurs at lower levels. In fact, for women, one can move over a full standard devation from the mean and still be in the realm of local influence.

Also noteworthy is the political efficacy variable. While the means for men and women are virtually identical, men show far more

Table 5

Zero Order Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations of Basic Variables for Males (N = 63)

$\bar{X}$	SD		PART	ED	AGE	SEI	INC	KNOW	EFF	PINT
4.79	5.29	PART	1.000							
11.46	3.04	ED	.183	1.000						
43.84	17.58	AGE	.123	-.303	1.000					
36.58	20.88	SEI	.312	.325	.152	1.000				
8881.20[a]	6394.60	INC	.034	.098	-.053	-.066	1.000			
5.65	2.75	KNOW	.330	.504	-.170	.374	.188	1.000		
2.38	4.26	EFF	.454	.315	-.103	.215	.083	.433	1.000	
3.10	.98	PINT	.256	.245	.066	.013	.109	.282	.179	1.000

[a]One respondent reported an income of $915,000. Since the outlier misleadingly distorted the mean and standard deviation, it was excluded from the calculation of income.

Table 6

Zero Order Correlations, Means, and Standard Variations of Basic Variables for Females (N = 49)

$\bar{X}$	SD		PART	ED	AGE	SEI	INC	KNOW	EFF	PINT
1.84	3.70	PART	1.000							
11.74	2.36	ED	.062	1.000						
46.62	19.19	AGE	-.093	-.266	1.000					
34.28	22.21	SEI	.073	.499	.030	1.000				
8559.50	9253.30	INC	.321	.256	-.196	.070	1.000			
5.14	2.52	KNOW	.244	.354	-.069	.395	.200	1.000		
2.35	1.33	EFF	.105	.394	-.446	.420	.278	.184	1.000	
2.73	1.04	PINT	.406	.166	.105	.355	.148	.550	.038	1.000

variation than do women. Given the similarity of the means, this suggests that men are more likely to be represented in either end of the distribution.

Further, while the income means for men and women are very similar, women display much more variation than do men. We can think of no compelling reason why this pattern should hold, and offer only the possible effects of outliers in such a small sample or some unassessed degree of differential reporting as an explanation.

Turning to the correlation matrices, we see that with two very notable exceptions, all correlations involving perceived political influence are greater for men than for women. The exceptions are income (.324 versus .034) and political interest (.406 versus .256).

Analysis for Males

For males the bivariate regression of perceived political influence education is insignificant (see Table 7). When occupation and family income are entered into the equation, occupation becomes an important predictor while neither education nor income reach significance.

Adding age and sense of efficacy leads to the effects of occupation falling just below significance, an insignificant age coefficient, and a highly important effect of efficacy. The importance of efficacy does not change when knowledge and interest are added to the equation.

We would suggest that net of all other personal and positional variables, sense of political efficacy remains the best predictor of perceived political influence for men.

Table 7

Standardized Beta Coefficients of Perceived Political Influence on Resource Variables for Males (N = 63)[a]

Independent Variables	(1) Beta	(2) Beta	(3) Beta	(4) Beta	(5) Beta	(6) Beta
ED	.183	.085	.137	.037	-.008	-.046
SEI		.287*	.251*	.190	.156	.188
INC		.045	.044	.017	-.004	-.010
AGE			.111	.150	.161	.126
EFF				.417*	.380*	.369*
KNOW					.140	.100
PINT						.163
$\bar{R}^2$	.018	.061	.060	.210	.220	.220

[a]* Denotes betas significant at .05 level.

Analysis for Females

Table 8 indicates that for women it is family income rather than personal education or occupation which enables them to engage in perceived successful political participation. Even when age, political efficacy, and political knowledge are added to the equation, only the relationship between income and influence remains significant. When political interest is entered, while income remains significant, interest also importantly affects perceived influence.

The above discussion suggests that the perceived political influence process differs for men and women. For men, the important variables are occupation and sense of political efficacy. For women, the important variables are family income and political interest. We would argue that for men, high position in the occupational structure, when combined with a positive sense of political efficacy, is more likely to produce perceived successful political participation. For women, perceived successful political participation depends on high family income combined with high political interest.

The fact that political efficacy is the best predictor of perceived political influence for men supports other studies which have shown a high relationship between political efficacy and political influence. The more interesting case is the substantial effects of political interest and family income on women's participation. One might explain these relationships in the following way: Given that a woman has sufficient political interest, high family income may afford opportunities for contact with political influentials as well as the time necessary

Table 8

Standardized Beta Coefficients of Political Participation on Resource Variables for Females (N = 49)[a]

Independent Varaibles	(1) Beta	(2) Beta	(3) Beta	(4) Beta	(5) Beta	(6) Beta
ED	.062	-.063	-.077	-.076	-.112	-.073
SEI		.082	.090	.100	.029	-.071
INC		.332*	.325*	.329*	.298*	.256*
AGE			-.050	-.060	-.049	-.082
EFF				-.025	.007	.038
KNOW					.210	.010
PINT						.407*
$\bar{R}^2$	-.017	.049	.030	.003	.024	.124

a* Denotes betas significant at .05 level of significance.

for political activities. Such circumstances may allow political interest to be translated into perceived successful political participation.

Finally, it is worth noting that the coefficients of determination ($\bar{R}^2$) for the male equations are consistently higher than those for females. This suggests that the process of influence as we have measured it, is somewhat more determined for men, and that men are better able to translate their resources into political activity than are women. Our interpretation of these results rests more upon the structural constraints (e.g. child birth and child rearing, direct discrimination against women participating in the area of politics) mitigating against women attempting political influence than it does upon any supposed limitations in the political expertise of women. We do not, of course, have data that speak to this question, but leave our interpretation open for subsequent research.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In the present study, a measure of perceived political influence was constructed in an attempt to clarify the sociological concept of political participation and to apply it to an empirical situation. The measure of influence was constrained to successful legitimate influence attempts as directed at elected executive and legislative authorities at the local, state, and federal levels. On the basis of these constraints both a 3-item and an 18-item scale were constructed which ranked people hierarchically according to the highest level of government at which they feel they have been influential. The shorter scale, for reasons discussed earlier, was not employed in this analysis.

We have held perceived political influence to be associated with several personal and positional characteristics. These characteristics include

educational attainment, occupational status, annual family income, age, sex, political knowledge, sense of political efficacy, and political interest.

Using a sample of 112 adults aged 18 and over drawn from Chippewa County, Wisconsin, we applied regression techniques to assess the relationship between these resource characteristics and the perceived influence scale. When the sample was stratified on the basis of sex, we found that occupational level and political efficacy appear to be the important variables for men, while family income and political interest are the important variables for women. This suggests that the process of perceived influence differs for men and women. We have offered possible explanations for these differences.

We believe that our analysis offers a potentially useful measurement technique, and that it has directed us to some important insights regarding the perceived political influence of rural people. We further contend that our efforts have helped to clarify the participation/influence nexus, a distinction previously unsatisfactorily dealt with in the literature. Finally, we see the perceived political influence scale as a viable technique by which to assess the political dimension of stratification.

Appendix A

Scoring the Long Form

We experimented with several ways of scoring the 18 item scale. In a first attempt, we simply added up a person's score for all 18 items and that total score became a person's perceived political influence score. The alpha coefficient using this scoring technique was .727. The problem with such a scoring technique is that it violates our theoretical assumption of a hierarchy of influence based on highest level of government at which one achieves successful influence. For instance, a person who did three activities at the local level (and nothing else) would get a total score of three, while a person who engaged in only one act of national influence (and nothing else) would get a total score of one. Clearly, then, in comparing these two people, person one would appear more influential than person two. However, that score would occur simply on the basis of having done a greater number of things than the person who had done only one thing nationally. While amount of perceived influence at any level may be an important issue, the major argument being considered here is that differentiation of people's influence should be done according to the level of government at which they perceive themselves to be influential--not simply the amount of influence they may have had at any level. Such a scoring technique does not fit our theoretical argument.

In order to approximate a hierarchical scale, we next attempted to collapse modes of influence within any particular level and assign a person a score of zero if he had exerted no influence at any level; one

if he engaged in at least one form of successful influencing at the local level and nothing higher; two if he had engaged in at least one form of successful influencing at the state level and nothing higher; and three if he had engaged in at least one form of successful influencing at the national level, regardless of what he may have done at other levels. While initially appealing, this aggregation led to an unacceptable loss of variance. In effect, this measure will not allow us to discriminate adequately between respondents. Therefore, this measuring technique was also discarded.

Our final solution to this scoring problem was to incorporate modes of influence into the framework of levels of influence. On this basis a person would get a score of zero if he had engaged in no influence attempts at any level; he would get a score of one to six if he had engaged in one to six successful forms of influencing at the local level and had done nothing at any higher levels; he would get a score of seven to twelve if he had engaged in one to six successful forms of influencing at the state level and nothing at the national level (all this regardless of what he had done at the local level); and a score of thirteen to eighteen if he had engaged in one to six successful forms of influencing at the national level, regardless of what he had done at lower levels. (See Figures 1 and 2.) Such a conceptualization is more congruent with our theory than the first scoring technique and solves the loss of variance problem of the second model. Further, it allows us to differentiate between indiviuals who are more or less active within any given level. However, it still leaves us with a problem. That is, how can reliability be assessed for this model? While an alpha coefficient can be computed for the present

scale, we would expect it to be larger than the alpha coefficient for the amount variable and not strictly interpretable.

It is quite easy to see why the alpha coefficient will increase simply by considering the alpha coefficient itself:

$$r_{kk} = \frac{k}{k-1}\left[1 - \frac{\Sigma\sigma_i^2}{\Sigma\sigma_y^2}\right]$$

or in words;

$$r_{kk} = \frac{\text{number of items in scale}}{\text{number of items in scale} - 1}\left[1 - \frac{\text{sum of the variances of each individual item}}{\text{variance of a sum of items}}\right]$$

Consider simply the quantity in parentheses:

$$1 - \frac{\text{sum of the variances of each individual item}}{\text{variance of a sum of items}}$$

What happens when one adds the variance in the sum of items due to the scoring of the scale as a hierarchy to the variance in the sum of items due to scoring the items in terms of amounts of influence is that one adds a new component of variance to the denominator of the term (that is, the variance of the sum of items).

Analogously, in symbols, the denominator of the quantity goes from:

Var (A), which equals the variance due to number of modes of influence to:

$$\text{Var}(A + B) = \text{Var}(A) + \text{Var}(B) + 2\text{Cov}(A, B)$$

where the Var (A + B) is variance due to number of modes of influence and variance due to scoring the scale hierarchically. Meanwhile,

the numerator of the equation, the sum of the variances of each individual item, has not changed in the rescaling.

Therefore, the quantity $(1 - \frac{\Sigma\sigma_i^2}{\Sigma\sigma_y^2})$ will necessarily increase and so the alpha coefficient will increase. The alpha coefficient does in fact increase to .852.* The increase in the alpha coefficient is a result of scoring the scale as a hierarchy. The alpha coefficient is no longer simply an item to total correlation but is rather an item to adjusted total correlation where the total variance score has components due to amount of influence and level in the hierarchy at which that influence took place. The total variance is then dependent on amount of influence and where that influence took place in the hierarchy. To see why this makes the alpha coefficient hard to interpret refer to Figure 1.

Such a measurement of the total score makes the relationship of any individual item to the total score dependent on where that individual item occurs; that is, the relationship will differ as the item occurs at the local level of influence, or the state level of influence, or the national level of influence. Therefore, it becomes difficult to interpret exactly what an item to total correlation means.

We realize that problems with the interpretability of the above alpha coefficient draw into question the reliability of the scale. Ideally, one would want to obtain another reliability measure such as test/retest reliability. Unfortunately, there is no second measure

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*The alpha coefficient for the short form, constructed in an analagous fashion, is .800.

of the scale in the present study so test/retest reliability is not possible to obtain. We have, however, chosen to employ the 18 item measure scored hierarchically in the following analysis for reasons of theoretical validity. It is our purpose here to develop a measure which ranks people according to the highest level of government at which they have carried out successful political influence. Such a hierarchical scoring technique seems to be the most theoretically appealing choice.

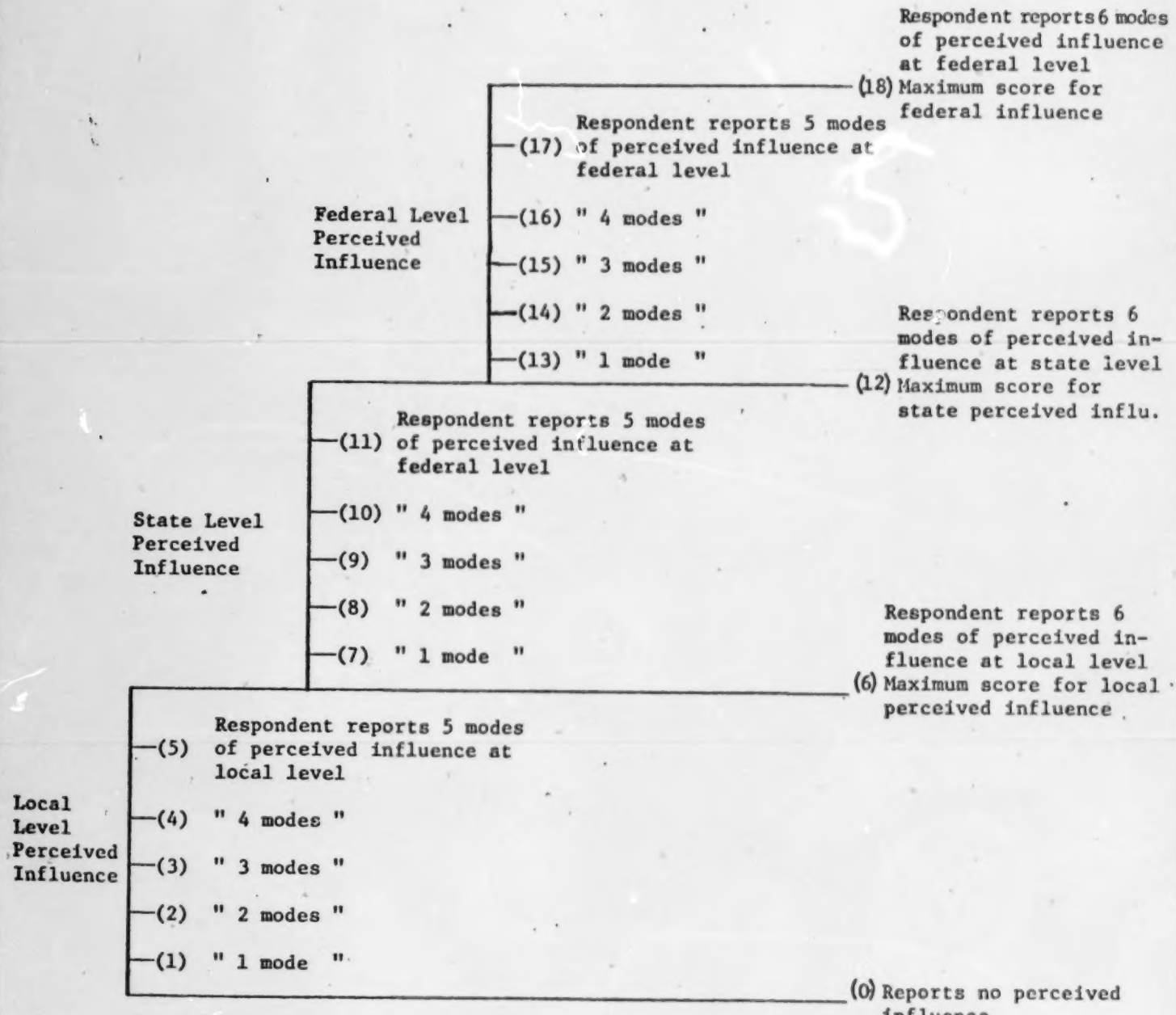
Figure 1

Consideration of the Interpretability of the Alpha Coefficient for the Revised Hierarchical Measure of Perceived Political Influence

Attempts to influence locally	Possible scores	Whether a person will score a one through six is dependent on number of modes of influence at the local level and whether one scores anywhere on the state or national questions—if one scores there, his total score must be greater than six.
Item 1	1-0	
Item 2	1-0	
Item 3	1-0	
Item 4	1-0	
Item 5	1-0	
Item 6	1-0	
Attempts to influence state wide	**Possible scores**	**Whether a person will score a seven through twelve is dependent on number of modes of state influence and whether one scores on national items—if one scores on national items, one's score must be greater than twelve. At the same time one's score is also independent of having scored at all on local questions.**
Item 1	1-0	
Item 2	1-0	
Item 3	1-0	
Item 4	1-0	
Item 5	1-0	
Item 6	1-0	
Attempts to influence nationally	**Possible scores**	**Whether a person will score a thirteen throughout eighteen is dependent on number of modes of national influence one has engaged in and is independent of whether one scored on state or local variables.**
Item 1	1-0	
Item 2	1-0	
Item 3	1-0	
Item 4	1-0	
Item 5	1-0	
Item 6	1-0	

Figure 2

Representation of Scoring Technique for 18 Item Scale


Respondent reports 6 modes of perceived influence at federal level
(18) Maximum score for federal influence
Respondent reports 5 modes of perceived influence at federal level
(17)
(16) " 4 modes "
(15) " 3 modes "
(14) " 2 modes "
(13) " 1 mode "
Federal Level Perceived Influence
Respondent reports 6 modes of perceived influence at state level
(12) Maximum score for state perceived influ.
Respondent reports 5 modes of perceived influence at federal level
(11)
(10) " 4 modes "
(9) " 3 modes "
(8) " 2 modes "
(7) " 1 mode "
State Level Perceived Influence
Respondent reports 6 modes of perceived influence at local level
(6) Maximum score for local perceived influence
Respondent reports 5 modes of perceived influence at local level
(5)
(4) " 4 modes "
(3) " 3 modes "
(2) " 2 modes "
(1) " 1 mode "
Local Level Perceived Influence
(0) Reports no perceived influence

[a]Numbers in parentheses refer to score on perceived political influence scale.

[b]Note: Individuals reporting state influence may also have been active at the local level. Likewise, individuals reporting national influence may have been active at state and local elvels. See Table 1.

Footnotes

[1]Where influence refers to changing the probability that a person or group will adopt the behavior preferred by the influencer as a result of his actions toward that person or group.

[2]Verba and Nie (1972) present an alternative way to study the effectiveness of participation.

[3]The present paper is based on results of a research project under the direction of Archibald O. Haller. The measurement scale presented was originally developed to assess an aspect of the power dimension in stratification. (See Svalastoga, 1965.)

[4]It is important to note the limitations of an approach which measures influence by means of self-reported perceptions. The most important limitation of such a conception is that one is left with no way of knowing what the official would have done if no such influence attempt had been made. That is, would the official have taken the action he did without the influence applied by the respondent—if so, then influence has not been truly assessed.

[5]It seems probable that such a scale will pick up only legitimate influence attempts.

[6]The judicial branch, unlike the others, is essentially closed to all but those influences which its officials, the judges, demand; and even these are presented by specifically authorized personnel, lawyers and sworn witnesses.

[7]The claim has been made that the legislative branches of government are subordinated to the executive and so influencing the first could be indicative of less power than influencing the second. Miliband (1969) suggests that, "... legislative assemblies have lost power to the executive..."

[8]See, for example, Lester Milbrath (1965: 54) for a discussion of this point.

[9]See, for example, Bennett and Klecka (1970).

[10]To assess a possible non-linear effect of age, we performed a cross tabular analysis of age by influence levels (local, state, and federal). The results of this analysis disclose no such effects.

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